Steep

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Steep

by stereokem

Summary

Hannibal was no stranger to hunger.

Clue: Hannibal and Will, with a ladder, and choking.

Notes

I have several points I need to address:

1. There have been several (if not many) rewrites of the ladder scene from Buffet Froid. This was born of the intention of doing so, but the ladder's role is slightly different here. Originally, there wasn't going to be any sex. But, somehow, a blowjob worked its way into the fic.

2. Technically speaking, this is dub-con, if not some degree of rape. One party attempts to negate a sex act, and the other party does not listen. You've been warned.

3. As before, this is unbeta'd and self-edited. I attempted not to let either of the boys get too OOC, but given the circumstances…

See the end of the work for more notes

Will has been avoiding him.

To his credit, he has not been doing so in any obvious way, not to the extent that anyone else might have noticed. For a man who seemed always to be the worst pupil of both subtlety and civility, Will Graham managed to avoid Hannibal Lecter very expertly, if not very diplomatically. Just a few days after their *tete-a-tete*, Hannibal was invited by Jack to a new crime scene. Will, of course, was there when he arrived, overseeing the excavation of yet another lushly blooming garden of death with a look of deliberate and concentrated disgust. Approaching from the other side of the yellow tape, Hannibal marveled. Not at the scene itself, which was gruesome to behold (read: sloppy, and in such a pestilent state that it made his nose pucker). He was engaged, instead, by the put-upon expression that Will so dutifully wore. He wondered what it might be hiding.

When Will, sensing new movement in his periphery, turned his head in Hannibal's direction, his expression slackened briefly—but he regained his composure in an instant. The only real acknowledgement Hannibal received was a gruff nod before Will turned back to his survey. He barely spoke directly to the doctor, and Hannibal chose not to force interaction; they exchanged theories by throwing them at Jack who, unwittingly but admirably, acted as a conduit and mediator. Hannibal was careful to stay at least six feet from Will at all times, but he noticed that the disgusted expression had not left Will's darkened face. Instead, it had outgrown the guise of a façade and lingered more finely around the corners of Will's down-turned mouth.

There was a tense moment when Jack, called away by Beverly, left them standing alone together. They lingered in a less-than-companionable silence, not looking at each other but staring instead at the mutilated body strewn on the frore, wet ground before them. Will coughed, and shoved his hands deep into his pockets.

Hannibal was the first to turn away and leave the scene.

A week passed. Will's jacket remained in Hannibal's office.

The evening of the incident, after Will had left, Hannibal had allowed the jacket to perch idly on the back of the chair it had been placed upon. He sat at his desk, glancing up from his sketching every now and then to look at it. The garment, plain and unremarkable as it was, took on a nearlysupernatural air. It seemed almost to watch him, to follow him with button eyes as he went about his evening routine. It was like a part of Will – his ghost, perhaps—was still in the room, observing him. The delicate scents of Will still clinging to the fabric

called cloyingly to Hannibal, recalled to him those frantic moments when Will was atop of him, attempting to suss his secrets out with his tongue.

Taking the garment in hand once more, Hannibal turned the encounter over in his mind. It had been hours since Will's departure, plenty of time to regain his external and internal equanimity; and he *was* composed—but that did not stop something wholly primal in him from tingling with residual energy. He brought the jacket closer to him, just under his nose, inhaled deeply, and he was *there*—pinned beneath Will, wrists caught in a vice grip, listening to the sound of his own heartbeat as a hot mouth attempted to brand his skin with untold rage and fear and frustration.

He inhaled again, taking in the different aromas and searching among them for the one he wanted. He had scented it before, he realized, catalogued it without being able to place what it was—there. The overnote, sly and thin but tangible. Sweet, like the smell of rotting meat seeping through a bouquet of funeral flowers. Unmistakable, now that he knew what it was. Buried under the smells of sweat, many dogs, and that abominable aftershave—hunger, like a tightly coiled iron spring.

Hannibal was no stranger to hunger. Hunger had given him his beginnings, after all. First, it had been physical hunger, endured in the death-cackle of winter with his little sister hugged tightly to his chest, like a doll. Then it was need, a desire so visceral that it made him both sick and strong all at once, dizzy and clear-headed, full of rage and absolutely calm. Hannibal's hunger was insatiable, implacable. All-consuming.

But what of Will? Hannibal lowered the jacket from his face and stared down at it, tracing over its lines and creases with his thumbs and sharp brown eyes. Hannibal had seen it—well, something—in Will the very instant he had laid eyes on him. Will pretended to have no filter, exuded the jumpiness of a raw and exposed nerve; it was this pretense that allowed him to hide himself so completely from other people. Hannibal had seen that it was a guise, but had not seen through it; now, Will had permitted him a glimpse beyond the veil, and it left Hannibal to wonder: what hunger was this?

Holding the jacket in one hand, Hannibal used the other to run the pads of his fingers over his wrists where Will had held him. There would certainly be bruises (and there were: when they bloomed, he covered them elegantly, with French cuffs). Though not a stranger to hunger, sexual desire was something Hannibal rarely felt. Sex and sex acts had never been about personal gratification—he derived that elsewhere—but about pleasing or placating other people, feeding upon their desire and feeling it through them by proxy. He preferred to give rather than receive, give and watch the transformation his gift initiated. He enjoyed sex in that regard; it was one of the few times when ordinary people felt free to be their most animal, their most savage. Sex made beasts and barbarians of everyone.

And Will? Did Will desire him thus? Hannibal pressed his lips together, thumbing the fabric of the jacket once more. It would seem so. Will was impulsive—his kissing Alana proved as much—but somehow, their own encounter did not have the feel of misplaced lust.

What kind of hunger?

Hannibal ran his finger under the jacket collar. The faintest ghost of a frown skated across his mouth.

Before he left the office that night, he placed the jacket on the coat-stand by his door. There it would wait, he decided, until Will came back for it.

Or for him.

He paid visit to Abigail in the hospital. In the very recent past, this was an activity that he and Will had undertaken together, and it almost felt strange to go it alone— which, he surmised ruefully, was only further testament to how accustomed he had grown to Will Graham's company.

(One might almost say that he was *spoiled*.)

Abigail was immediately taken by the absence of Will. She frowned when Hannibal entered the room alone, and he returned her gaze with a mildly reproachful look. She blushed immediately, but asked her blunt question anyway:

"Where's Will?"

Apparently, he had not been to see Abigail either.

Another week trickled by. Hannibal finally relented and took Will's coat in for dry-cleaning; there was no point now in maintaining its state, all traces of Will having finally faded into little more than a dull murmur in the harsh fabric. When Hannibal brought the jacket home with him, he removed the protective plastic shroud and replaced the hanger with one that did not bear signs of the dry-cleaner. After some deliberation, he left the tag on: it was discreetly placed on the hem of the sleeve, easy to miss if one was not careful (or if one was not Hannibal). It did not contain a price, but the company's logo was present; and event Will, who rarely took anything to a dry cleaner's when not forced, would know by the name that the establishment was expensive.

Hannibal wondered vaguely at himself, his meditated actions. Why was he intent upon exposing his treatment of Will's clothing to him? More veiled messages? Will would blanche. He would be horrified that Hannibal had spent money on him, on something he owned.

Or perhaps he wouldn't.

He contemplated leaving the jacket at his house, but in the end, brought it back to his office, to once more hang neatly on the coat-stand by the door. When Will approached him again-- for Hannibal was certain that he would— he would not do so directly on Hannibal's turf. He would do it while they were both out and about together, and Hannibal could easily segue their interaction back to his office; and there, the jacket would be waiting— patiently, innocuously— for Will.

Another week passed.

Hannibal was not called into a crime scene. He saw patients, Monday through Friday. On Wednesday, he visited Abigail again. This time, he brought her a meal he had prepared himself: smoked flank, grilled red potatoes, greens. An insulated jar of lavender and rosemary sorbet for desert. She was grateful for the "real" food, and did not ask about Will again; but it seemed that it was her turn to look at him reproachfully, almost as if to say: *What have you done? Where have you frightened him off to?*

Where, indeed.

Another man, a less perceptive man would have been worried; but worry was absurd. Will Graham could never leave well-enough alone. That was the bloodhound in him: one he uncovered something, he had to pursue it, regardless of the danger involved. It was like a compulsion; he didn't have a choice. He would come back, eventually.

So, Hannibal waited.

And, like a gift, that next Monday Hannibal received a phone call.

It was late—late for him to still be at his office, anyway. It was approximately 7:30 in the evening, and he was finishing up notes on a new patient whom he had agreed to see today at 6 to accommodate their work schedule. He was sitting at his desk, composing his thoughts on the patient in his notebook, when the landline in his office rang.

The digital display on the phone showed a familiar Virginia area code—though not the one he was hoping for. Not entirely urgent, then. Hannibal finished his last words, set aside his pen, and picked up on the third ring.

"Jack," he greeted. Cradling the phone in one hand, he stood from his office chair and took up his notebook, keeping it open so that the ink could finish drying.

"Dr. Lecter," Jack returned. He sounded urgent and worried, almost angry. *"Have you heard from Will?"*

Hannibal shook his head, though Jack couldn't see. "No. Has something happened?" The concern that wormed its way into his voice was real. Had some other predator gotten a hold of his mongoose— figuratively or literally?

"We were at the LeBeau crime scene early this morning – and he just took off. Didn't say a word, not about the scene or where he was going. He arrived on scene, looked for, hell, maybe ten minutes, turned around, and left. I've been trying to reach him on his cell and home phone all day, but he hasn't picked up either. Do you know where he is?"

There is no accusation in his voice. He does not suspect Hannibal of anything untoward, although it is obvious that Jack would love someone to blame at this point, would gladly start pointing fingers if it meant that his search would have a foreseeable end, if it meant that he could find a way to not worry.

Hannibal understands.

"I—"

But it is at that very moment that the door to Hannibal's office burst open with a loud wrenching—and who else should be standing there but Will Graham.

Will looked wild. The top layer of his hair was matted with sleet and several locks stuck to his temples, his forehead. A droplet of water was poised at the end of his nose, a sheen of it around his lips which are open, red from cold. His jacket—an older, thinner one—was soaked. There was slush on his shoes, and he is breathing hard. His expression was an odd mixture of uncertainty and sure terror.

He stared at Hannibal. Then at the phone in his hand.

On the other side of the line, Jack's voice crackled:

"Dr. Lecter—"

"Will has just set foot into my office." He held Will's gaze, unblinking; having been deprived of a sight they've grown so use to, his maroon eyes drank him in, thirsty. "I will call you back later this evening," he said to Jack.

"But—"

"Let me attend to this," Hannibal cut him off quietly. "I will contact you later."

There is a very tense pause. Then Jack sighed, defeated. *"Fine. I will hold you to that."* Click. The line went dead.

Lowering the phone from his ear, Hannibal finally addressed his intruder:

"Will."

The man's reaction to his own name was subtle, but startling. His expressive blue eyes glinted and shied, as if flinching, and one corner of his mouth curled upwards in the most minute of grimaces. It was that same look of disgust he had witnessed at the crime scene.

"I've been thinking," he said quietly, when he could finally meet Hannibal's eyes again.

The words echoed in Hannibal's head meaninglessly. There were so many things he could say to Will right now—all the obvious, banal things: *You are soaked. Where have you been? You look exhausted. Why have you worried Uncle Jack so? How are your dreams, Will?*

But he refrained from voicing any of these things.Instead, he played along, adopting his most serviceable psychiatrist voice: “About what?”

Will swayed in the doorway, looking not at Hannibal, but at the space between them. It was as if he wanted to step further inside, but was apprehensive. Afraid to. His fear was collecting in a cold, dark puddle on the floor by his shoes. It was going to warp the wood.

“Please remove your coat.”

This quiet command also seemed to startle Will, but he obeyed instantly. He shrugged out of the sopping garment, revealing a slightly less soaked dark green flannel shirt beneath. The wet jacket shifted in his shaky hands. He would not meet Hannibal’s eyes anymore; he seemed frozen, petrified, nervous energy rolling off him in crackling waves. It was so tangible that Hannibal could taste the electricity in the air, burnt and metallic.

Slowly, so as not to upset the precarious balance between them, Hannibal stepped back to his desk and set both the phone and notebook down. He then crossed over to Will, and stopped three feet in front of him.

Will let out a shaky breath. He held the jacket in front of him in both hands, like a shield.

Without a word, Hannibal reached forward and gently tugged the jacket from his grasp.

Will let go, dropping his gaze immediately to the floor.

Hannibal looked at him for a moment, eyes quiet. Will was not completely in the room yet; he was still poised over the threshold, one foot on either side, as if he would need to sprint back out the door again.

But he couldn’t leave, not now. Hannibal needed him. It was an odd thing to realize, but Hannibal would not shy away from something he felt so intrinsically: he needed Will to stay. He carefully stepped to the side, and gestured with his free hand to his office: lush, inviting, warm.

“Come inside, Will.”

This, it seemed, was all the shivering man needed to hear. Will nodded and stepped fully over the threshold with little protest, walking past Hannibal to stand near one of the interviewing chairs. Hannibal shut the door to his office with a click.

Will stood awkwardly in the middle of the room in his damp clothes while Hannibal took his coat and hung it by the grate. The fire he had begun earlier had dwindled, but he rekindled it anew, hoping that it would dry Will’s coat to some degree. He then went to a dark mahogany cabinet in the corner of the room and pulled from the top shelf a thick wool blanket.

When he turned back around, Will was looking at him, but the man immediately turned his gaze downward when their eyes met. He bent down and began to unlace his shoes. Hannibal suppressed a frown, and said nothing.

“Here.” He crossed the space between them and unfolded the blanket. Before Will could protest, he was wrapping it around the shorter man’s shoulders, which shook under his touch. Will grasped at the blanket gratefully, and Hannibal took a step backward and pointed at one of the chairs by the fire.

“Sit,” he commanded.

Will’s adam’s apple bobbed along his throat. “But—”

“Will.”

Will lowered his gaze. He nodded.

Hannibal waited until Will had ambled over to the fire and unceremoniously plopped himself down before returning to his desk. He picked his notebook back up and made towards the ladder leading to the second level of his study.

“I’ve been driving around.”

That was Will, speaking quietly to the fire. Hannibal tucked the notebook to his chest with one hand and began climbing the ladder with the other, ascending easily. “And walking, it would seem,” he replied, once at the top.

“I – I was driving all day. Just – aimlessly, just thinking. I’ve been thinking—but I wasn’t thinking about driving. I – I ran out of gas five blocks from here.”

Hannibal surveyed his bookshelf, the rows of notebooks, catalogues of patients, and searched for the proper place for the one in his hand. When he found it, he parted its neighbors and slid it between them. “How fortunate.”

“It wasn’t just *luck*,” Will muttered almost inaudibly. He sounded indignant. Good. Something other than fear suited him. “I led myself here. I think I’ve been meaning to come here all day. All month, actually.”

“It has been some time we last visited,” Hannibal conceded, climbing back down the ladder. Once on the lower level again, he walked towards the armchairs near the grate. Will was still staring into the fire, the orange light deepening the shadows in his face and making them dance.

“Because I’ve been avoiding you.”

Those words should not have sounded so sweet to him— but how he had missed this, this lack of pretense, this understanding between them. He stood behind the chair catty corner from Will and placed his hands on the chair’s back, looking into the fire, a microscopic smile on his lips. Most people handled their words like spoons and butter knives—dull, soft, meant to maintain civility. Will wielded his like a steak-knife, with sharp edges and one purpose: to cut through flesh, to separate carefully sliced layers and lay out a feast in plain sight. There was transparency between them, and it made Hannibal feel both exhilarated and vulnerable.

“I have been wondering about that.”

There was a pause that felt like a wince. “I’m sorry.”

Hannibal stared impassively into the fire, his position putting himself in full profile for Will, should the other man choose to look. “Do not be.”

“But I *am*.” Will sounded angry, frustrated. Hannibal spared the tiniest of glances over to him; he was bundled up tightly in the chair, glaring at the flames, the firelight highlighting the wet streaks in his dark curls.

“I came here to apologize,” he said quietly, voice only barely louder than the crackling of the fire.

“For your absence?”

Will shook his head. “No. For . . . last time.”

Ah. Hannibal removed all expression from his voice and face before replying: “There is no reason to apologize.”

In his periphery, Hannibal saw Will turn his head to look at him. While, perhaps, not beautiful, Hannibal knew he presented a striking image.

(Striking, and perhaps begging to be struck?)

Will made a strange sound, something between indignation and hysterics, with (Hannibal thought) the faintest hint of arousal. “But—but I – I *attacked* you—”

Hannibal watched the grate, counting the seconds, eyes going slightly glassy from staring at the fire. Finally, deliberately, he pushed away from the chair and turned his back on Will; he walked slowly back towards his desk. “You did not hurt me,” he murmured softly, watching his reflection in the polished wood. “I . . . was not shaken or disturbed by it.”

He heard Will stand suddenly, angrily. The wool blanket fell to the floor in a soft thump of cascading fabric, followed by the quick thudding of footsteps, bare feet against the throw-carpet of Hannibal’s office. The footsteps stopped just behind Hannibal.

“Well maybe you *should* be. I haven’t – been myself. Lately.”

Hannibal’s head was filled with roses. Roses bright in bloom and buds, decaying and senescing, filling his head with their sickly sweet smell. He let his eyes flutter closed, inhaled deeply. He breathed out an exhalation of death. Slowly, he turned.

Will’s eyes met his, dark and deer-like despite their aqua hue. He was still damp, and trembling all over. He would have looked vulnerable, almost child-like, if it weren’t for his shallow breathing and wide black pupils, the way his fingers twitched at his sides, his bare toes curling in the carpet. His agitation and arousal smelled sharp to Hannibal.

“Who have you been, Will?”

It was the wrong question to ask—Hannibal had known it was. He simply enjoyed the look that overtook Will's face: the frustration, the potent but helpless animus, that flash of something dark before Will recovered and hid himself again.

He dropped his eyes, shaking his head in frustration. "That isn't – this is not— you know what? Never mind. I can't be here right now." He turned sharply, preparing to leave again.

Hannibal would have been lying if he said that his move to reach out and grasp at Will's arm was entirely calculated.

"Will—"

"No!"

It was surprising, how quickly Will reacted. With more speed and force than Hannibal would have anticipated, Will whirled around and snatched the wrist of the hand that was reaching for him. Hannibal was delicate by no means, but Will's grip on his wrist seemed tight and vicious enough that he might break bone.

Using the caught wrist as leverage, Will stepped forward into Hannibal's space, causing him to step backwards until he came in contact with something solid. He pressed back against the ladder, the rungs digging between the ridges of his spine and against his scapulae as Will pressed in close. A thrill unlike anything he had experienced raced through him, silvery and warm, his nerves alight and quivering with energy, with excitement.

"You— " Will was breathing hard and unevenly, his eyes unfocused. "*You*—"

Slowly, Hannibal raised his free hand and brushed his fingers across Will's cheek.

The result was instantaneous. With a growl that seemed almost inhuman, Will grasped Hannibal's other hand and roughly shoved it up over his head, pressing it against a high rung of the ladder. His teeth clicked over Hannibal's as he assaulted his mouth, not quite kissing Hannibal so much as attempting to devour him, teeth and tongue working in tandem to try and suck the very essence of Hannibal out through his mouth. Hannibal felt Will press his body to him, his still-wet clothes transferring their dampness to Hannibal's own pristine suit. Hannibal's face was lashed with the silky wet tresses of Will's hair, and it was as if Will was attempting to smear Hannibal with the rain that still clung to him. Will's hands were ice-cold on his wrists, but his lips were impossibly hot, his tongue hotter still, and Hannibal, despite himself, despite his reserve and self-control, let out a low and quiet groan.

He felt Will's lips curl into his skin where they were pressed at his throat, perceiving the vibrations of Hannibal's utterance. Will ground his hips upwards as if in response, and Hannibal felt the unmistakable presence of Will's stiff arousal on his thigh.

Will bit his chin, as if in warning, and removed one of his hands from where it had cornered Hannibal's against a rung of the ladder. Rough fingers traipsed down Hannibal's sharp cheekbone, and the curve of Will's hand settled just under Hannibal's chin squeezing his throat with more gentleness than Hannibal thought Will was currently capable of.

Up until this moment, Hannibal's body had shown only the requisite amount of interest its current situation, had produced physical responses congruent only with being placed in danger; but as Will's crafty fingers closed around his windpipe, Hannibal felt his nerves spark like livewires, and a distantly familiar warmth settle near his groin.

His own bodily response shocked him, and he gasped slightly, which only made Will clench harder. Hannibal's free hand wrenched itself from the ladder rung and clasped onto Will's—but he did not fight, or attempt to remove the vice from his throat. He only wrapped his fingers around Will's wrist, feeling for the pulse that beat slow and steady beneath slick, cold skin.

Will's hand was squeezing tightly and not relenting, and Hannibal was beginning to feel faint and light-headed. He attempted to push more air into his lungs, to deliver oxygen to his starved brain, but Will's grasp blocked air's passage down his windpipe. Unbidden, Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed.

He nearly lost consciousness. When he came back to, his legs were about to buckle, but the hand had been removed from his throat. He drew in a deep choked breath and blinked several times before he realized that Will was no longer leaning over him.

There was the fumbling of fabric, and Hannibal looked down just in time to see Will lifting his dress shirt out of his trousers, unbuttoning them, and pulling down his zipper quickly. Without hesitation, Will reached inside and freed Hannibal's erection from his clothes.

Immediately, Hannibal's entire body tensed. He narrowed his eyes, comprehending the situation. This—no. This would not do.

Still slightly dazed from the lack of oxygen, he attempted to reach one hand to Will's face, to redirect his attention. "Will," he croaked, "do not—"

Will shoved his hand away. He looked up at Hannibal, and there was almost nothing recognizable in his eyes. He looked frightening. Monstrous.

Hannibal licked his lips, trying again: "Will, stop—"

Purposefully and quickly, Will kept his eyes on Hannibal as he wrapped his lips around the head of Hannibal's cock.

Hannibal shuddered. He gripped the sides of the ladder with both hands as Will sucked, taking more of him into his mouth. There was no resisting now: his own body had betrayed him, was responding readily to Will's ministrations. He attempted to ground himself; he focused on his breathing, on the feel of the wood under his fingertips, the slightly unpleasant sensation of Will's damp forehead and curls against the exposed skin of his lower abdomen. . . . all to no avail. His world was soon narrowed to one very specific point: Will's mouth and where it made contact with his sensitive flesh.

In that moment, as he neared the point of completion, he felt for the first time truly and deeply angry with Will. He was angry at Will for ignoring his commands, angry that he

had been studiously avoiding him for so long, and angry at the skill and enthusiasm Will seemed to show in this particular task. He was angry at Will for taking power from him.

With a jolt (that was accompanied by a particularly filthy swirl of tongue) Hannibal arrived at a stark illumination. That, Hannibal realized, was the nature of Will's hunger. Will craved power.

Power over *Hannibal*.

And as much as it incensed him and made fury flush hot as molten led through his veins, he could not help but feel *pride and reverence*. Despite himself, he could not help but be in awe of the man who was devouring him with his mouth. Will was a beautiful, complicated creature, never commonplace, always surprising. And that he should want this, want to conquer Hannibal and bring him to his knees—even that was praise-worthy.

Will hollowed out his cheeks and sucked deeply, and Hannibal threw his head back, clutching at the ladder tightly, quaking with both fury and lust. He breathed harshly through his nose, and a trickle of delight flooded him as Will attacked his body more ravenously, determined to bring him off. The unfamiliar thrill of adoration wrapped around with a desire for violence flooded him as he looked down at Will. Hannibal was not an indulgent man, but he had enough presence of mind to discern that Will was absolutely famished for this, for him, that he *needed* to do this.

So, Hannibal would make an exception. He would grant Will this gift.

Being a predator, he supposed, was not everything. Sometimes, it was an equally vital experience to be prey.

End Notes

1. The fandom has sexualized Hannibal as a character to the nth degree. While I am, admittedly, an avid consumer of the products of this sexualization, I enjoy seeing Hannibal portrayed in a different light. I like the idea of a grey-asexual/demisexual and/or grey-romantic Hannibal. It's something I enjoy writing because I think those of us out there whose romantic/sexual orientations are a little more atypical need more in the fandom to relate to. If you have any questions about this after reading, please feel free to ask me about it.
2. I have just popped my smut cherry with this story. First stop, blowjob. Next stop, penetrative sex. Woo.
3. Also: If anyone ever tells you that it is easy to write from Hannibal's POV (third person or otherwise), they are lying.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!